



# The Byzantine Empire



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# The Eastern Empire



- Barbarian invasions weakened western Roman Empire
- Roman Emperor Constantine moved capital from Rome to Byzantium
- Western half of old Roman Empire fell into “Dark Ages”
- Eastern half of Empire became Byzantine Empire

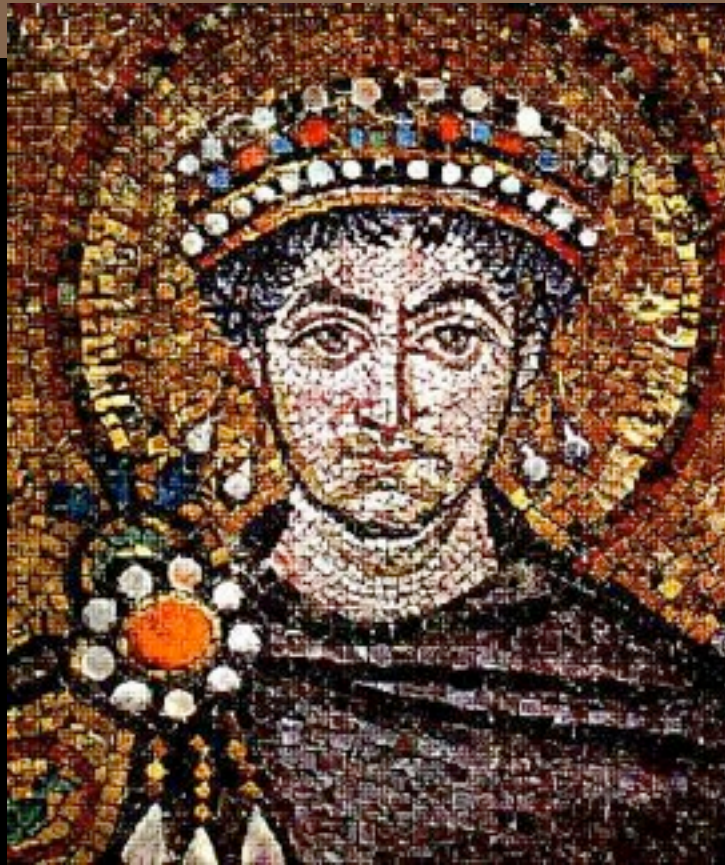
# Constantinople



- ✦ Constantinople became the sole capitol of the empire
- ✦ Located on a strait connecting Black Sea and Mediterranean
- ✦ Key trading location between Europe, Africa, and Asia



# The Reign of Justinian



The height of the first period of Byzantine history was the reign of Emperor Justinian (r. 537-565) and his wife Empress Theodora (d. 548)

# Law



- ✦ Justinian collated, revised, and improved Roman law. He became known for his collection of ancient laws known as **Justinian's Code**.
- ✦ This written set of laws became the basis today's international laws.



# Religion



- ☀ Christianity served as a unifying force in the empire.

# Architecture: Hagia Sophia

(imagine this minus minarets... they came later)

- A church, later converted into a mosque ([video link](#))
- Nearly 3 football fields long



Justinian was an ambitious builder. His greatest monument was the magnificent domed church of Hagia Sophia (Holy Wisdom), which was constructed in just five years (532-37).



# Hagia Sophia

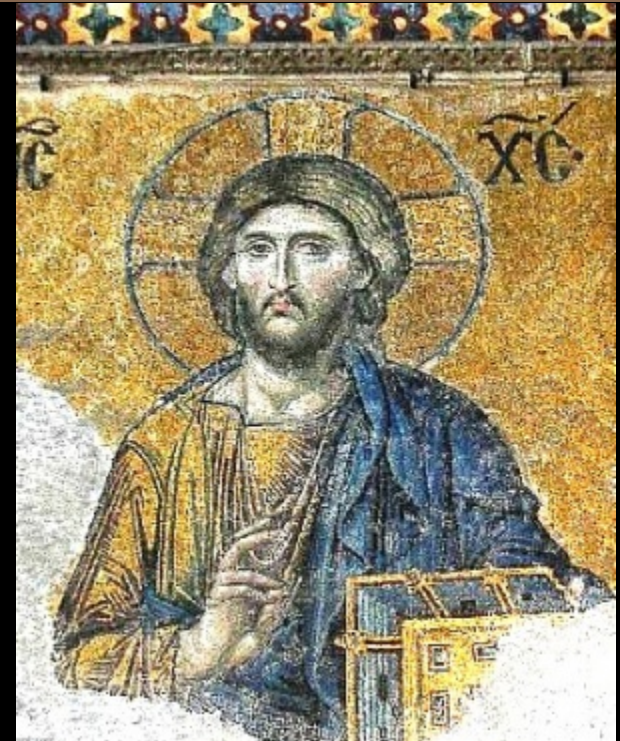
(inside)



- **Pendentives -**  
4 arches  
formed a  
square  
supporting  
the dome
- 40 arched  
windows  
encircle the  
base of the  
dome creating  
the illusion  
halo of light



# Byzantine art



In the area of art, the Byzantine empire made great contributions. **Icons** were images of Jesus, the Virgin Mary and others. These icons were supposed to create the sense that the holy person was actually present.

# Byzantine art



- ◆ **Nudes forbidden**
- ◆ **Bodies often misrepresented correct anatomy and proportion**
- ◆ **Lost Greek value of balance between body and mind**
- ◆ **Interested in soul**
- ◆ **Wanted to attract and inspire new believers**



# Byzantine art



Byzantine artists also developed **Mosaics**, pictures or designs formed by inlaid pieces of stone or other materials. Mosaics often displayed religious themes.



# Byzantine mosaics



- Glowing glass with wide range of colors
- Found on walls and ceilings
- Subjects were religious
- Background was abstract, sky-blue, gold, or green

# Byzantine mosaics



- **Intended to help share the new religion**
- **Often depicted Christ as teacher**
- **Human figures are flat, stiff, symmetrically placed.**
- **Almond-shaped faces and eyes, solemn expressions, little/no movement**



# Division in Christian Church



In 1054, a split occurred between the Orthodox Christian Church in the East and the Roman Catholic Church in the West.

# The Empire at Its Height



At its height, the Byzantine empire covered an area from Rome through southeastern Europe and Asia Minor, down to Egypt and across North Africa.

# Decline in the 7<sup>th</sup> Century



- ☀ In the seventh century the empire lost Syria, the Holy Land, Egypt, and North Africa to invading Islamic armies.



# Conquered by the Ottoman Turks



- ☀ In 1453, the city was finally and permanently conquered by the Ottoman Turks and renamed Istanbul. Byzantine culture - especially art - was adopted and adapted by successive Islamic empires.